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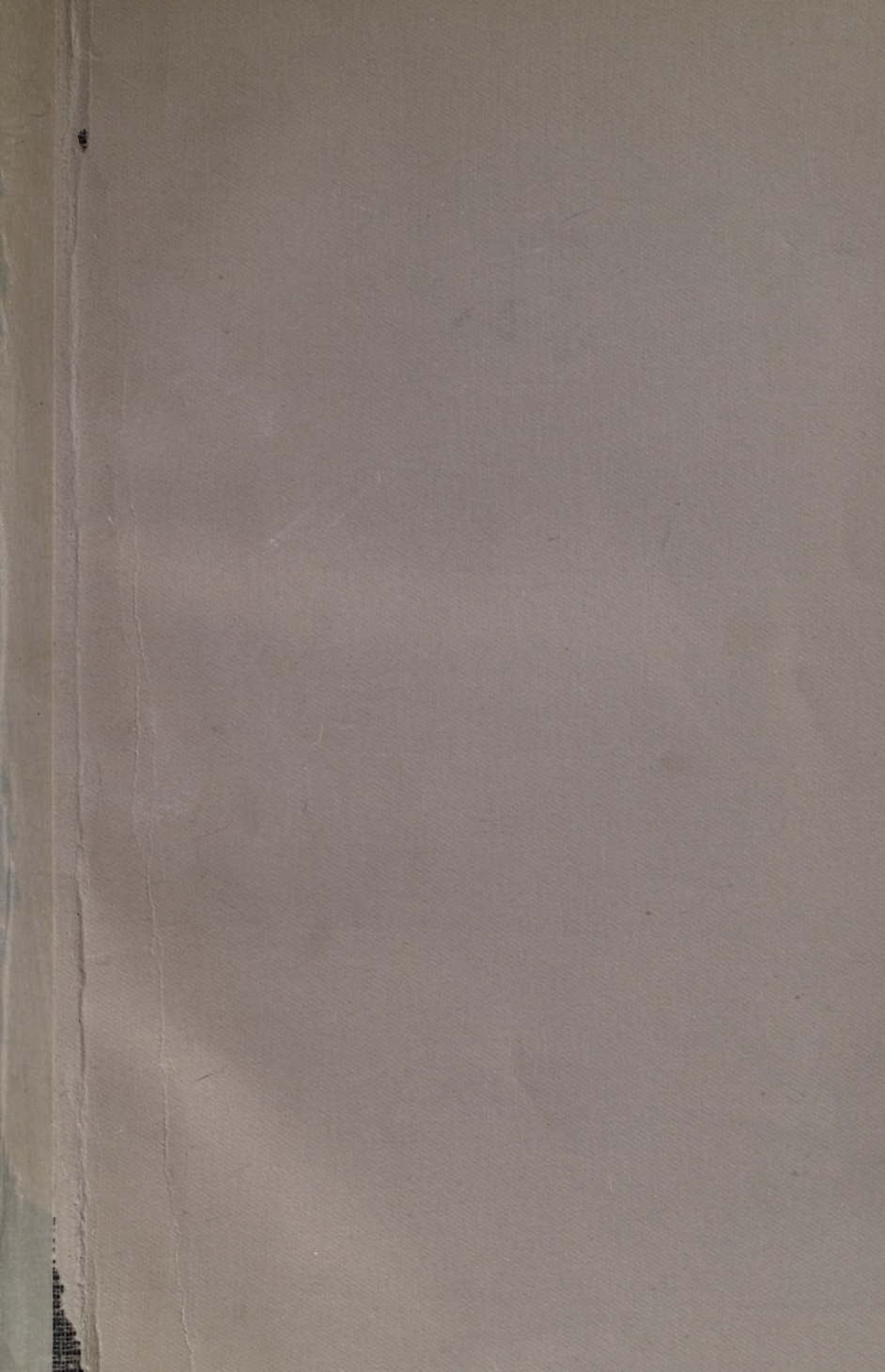
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EDWARD HYDE  
EARL OF CLARENDON

AS

STATESMAN HISTORIAN AND  
CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY

A LECTURE DELIVERED ON

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BY

C. H. FIRTH, M.A.

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF MODERN HISTORY

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## EDWARD HYDE EARL OF CLARENDON

TERCENTENARIES and similar celebrations of the births of great men are useful, though becoming somewhat hackneyed. We hear so much about the great men of the moment that we are in danger of ceasing to remember the greater men of the past. I do not mean that we are in danger of forgetting their names, but of forgetting what manner of men they were, and what they did to serve their own generation, and through it ours, and those to come. It is well, therefore, that at set times and seasons we should call to mind the things which are forgotten, and that our University should say to itself, as our colleges do, 'Let us now praise famous men and our fathers that begat us.'

Clarendon filled for many years a great place in English history, and recorded what he did and what he saw in books which fill a great place in our literature. Yet, compared to many men who achieved less, he is to-day but a vague and indistinct personality, and his works are amongst those English classics which educated people put into their shelves, and leave there. When I first undertook to address you on this subject I endeavoured to discover what the popular impression about him was. I thought that to find out what the popular impression was, and then, perhaps, to prove that, erroneous as it might seem, it was in reality fundamentally just, would be sure to please. But I was unfortunate in my researches. I began by asking a learned member of this University—one who was at once a man of culture and a man of affairs—what he thought of Clarendon's History of the Rebellion. He replied, 'I have a very beautifully bound copy of the work—I never read it, but I once did some

proses out of it.' He had not been tempted to turn over the leaf and try another page. When he had made his verbs and nouns agree his intellectual curiosity was satisfied. And even those who have no love of proses, the gentlemen whom the hard laws of the University compel to read select portions of the History, frequently do not look beyond them, and know little about the life of their writer. For there is no convenient little handbook on Clarendon. He has had bad luck with his immortality. He is not included amongst Lord Morley's *English Statesmen*, or amongst his *English Men of Letters*—probably because he was both. He is not accounted a 'Man of Action' or even worthy to be a 'Worthy'.

Yet any one who reflects for a moment on Clarendon's career must admit that he was a man of no common gifts and no ordinary character. He had no advantages of birth. He did not belong to one of those great families who inherit a claim to govern the state, and sometimes justify it. His father was the younger son of the younger son of a small Cheshire squire, and his mother the descendant of a line of Somersetshire clothiers. He was not rich, though he inherited a competence from his father, and the only relation he had in office was a judge who died too soon to be of much help to a young barrister. Hyde, in short, was one of the first examples in later English history of the man who begins in low estate, and rises by his own abilities to the highest political office :

'Who makes by force his merit known,  
And lives to clutch the golden keys,  
To mould a mighty state's decrees,  
And shape the whisper of the throne.'

Let us inquire first how Hyde rose. Unlike some who in our own days have risen to similar heights, Hyde did not greatly distinguish himself at the University. He matriculated at Magdalen Hall in January 1623. He might have matriculated at Magdalen instead, but the



President of that Society turned a deaf ear to the letter in which King James I ordered him to give the boy a demyship. He left the University three years later with the degree of B.A. and the reputation, as he tells us, 'rather of a young man of parts and pregnancy of wit, than that he had improved it much by industry.'

Nor was it by his success as a lawyer that Hyde rose to greatness. On leaving Oxford he entered the Middle Temple, and was called to the Bar in 1633. He had not long to wait for employment. Though his name does not appear in the law reports of the period, he was engaged in several causes before the Council, got into good practice in the Court of Requests, and speedily made a good professional income. As a rising young lawyer, he was elected to the two Parliaments which met in 1640. The Long Parliament was full of lawyers of greater knowledge and experience; there were some who had conducted great constitutional cases before he was even called to the Bar, others who had written learned law books that were cited before the judges, and men who held legal offices of various kinds. But he had qualifications for success that most of them lacked. To begin with, it is evident that when he was a young man he had a rare gift of making friends, and his popularity helped him. He prided himself on this power of making friends, and was wont to tell his sons 'that he owed all the little good that was in him to the friendships and conversation he had been used to of the most excellent men in their several kinds that lived in that age'. When he was a young law student in London his favourite companions were poets and playwrights—Ben Jonson, Charles Cotton, Thomas May, Thomas Carew, William Davenant, Edmund Waller. But even in that first band of friends there was one man of colossal learning in Hyde's future profession—namely, John Selden—one whose familiar talk must have been full of instruction, for 'in his conversation he was



the most clear discourser, and had the best faculty of making hard things easy and presenting them to the understanding of any man that hath been known'. A little later Hyde formed a second group of friends; men who were interested in literature too, but interested in the more serious side of it, and were wont to speculate about the highest problems of religion and politics, and to discuss them freely together. Selden was still of the company, but to him were added divines such as Sheldon, Morley, Earle, Hales, and Chillingworth, and, above all, the incomparable Falkland, whose conversation was 'one continued convivium philosophicum, or convivium theologicum, enlivened and refreshed with all the facetiousness of wit, and good humour, and pleasantness of discourse'. Later still, when Hyde began to succeed at the Bar, he became intimate with the leading men in his own profession, but his intimacy was never confined to them. He obtained a footing at the court, too, and became the friend of noblemen such as the earls of Pembroke, Hertford, Holland, and Manchester.

These friendships enhanced Hyde's success at the Bar, and made him a prominent figure amongst the young lawyers of the time. His brethren saw that he was 'very acceptable to persons of the best quality', observed that 'his condition of living was with more splendour than most young lawyers', and regarded him as a man of fashion and a man of influence. From the first he took a good position in the House of Commons. He was not a great orator; he had not the powerful and weighty eloquence of Pym, or the dexterity in debate of Hampden; still less did his speeches stir the emotions of his hearers as the passionate and fiery oratory of Eliot had done. There were a dozen men in the Long Parliament who had a greater reputation as orators. But Mr. Hyde was a speaker whom the House always heard with pleasure. Here was a lawyer who, to use his own phrase, had

sacrificed both to the Muses and the Graces. The combination of literary gifts and legal training was rarer then than it is now. Most of the lawyers of the time were pedantic and verbose speakers—unmerciful men to their audiences—and in a word bores of antediluvian vigour and proportions. Hyde could discuss constitutional questions with sufficient knowledge to impress, and in a sufficiently attractive style to please ; if he did not rise to the highest flights he was always easy and fluent, and could be dignified or humorous whenever the occasion demanded. Two competent observers have left us descriptions of his manner of speaking five-and-twenty years later, and we can gather from those descriptions what the characteristics of his style must have been in earlier years. ‘He spoke well,’ says Burnet, ‘his style had no flaw in it, but had a just mixture of wit and sense, only he spoke too copiously ; he had a great pleasantness in his spirit which carried him sometimes too far into raillery, in which he sometimes showed more wit than discretion.’<sup>1</sup> Mr. Pepys is still more eulogistic. ‘I am mad in love with my Lord Chancellor, for he do comprehend, and speak out well, and with the greatest ease and authority that ever I saw man in my life. . . . His manner and freedom of doing it as if he played with it, and was informing only all the rest of the company, was mighty pretty.’<sup>2</sup>

Deduct something from this as the results of long experience and high authority, and we can form a very just conception of what the Lord Chancellor’s speaking was like when he was still Mr. Hyde.

Yet it was not Hyde’s oratorical, but his literary skill which laid the foundation of his fortune. A moment came when a skilful writer was of more value to the King than the most eloquent speaker. In January 1642,

<sup>1</sup> *A Supplement to Burnet’s History of My Own Time*, ed. by H. C. Foxcroft, Oxford, 1902, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> *Diary*, October 13, 1666.

Charles I was in extremity. The attempt to arrest the Five Members had covered him with disgrace, and his design of introducing foreign forces into England had been revealed by his tamperings with the governors of Hull and Portsmouth. The leaders of the Parliament, full of fears and distrust, were demanding the right to control the army and the right to appoint the King's ministers. Both sides laid their case before the people, and about eight months of controversial warfare preceded the actual appeal to arms. During those eight months Hyde was invaluable. There were no able editors to set forth the case of the two antagonists in the columns of the newspapers, for though newspapers were beginning to exist, they were not yet organs adapted for political controversy. There were no reports of parliamentary debates to familiarize everybody with the arguments of party leaders, and, even if there had been, the secession of the King's party from Westminster had robbed the debates of their importance. All at once the capacity to write a state paper, to set forth a political programme, or to explain a constitutional theory, in such a way that every educated man could understand them, became the one essential gift. That was the gift Hyde possessed, and at no other time in English history would it have been so valuable. Whether the King had the better cause or not, thanks to Hyde he had the best of the controversy. On that point Hallam's verdict is decisive. He praises 'the temperate and constitutional language of the royal declarations and answers to the House of Commons, known to have proceeded from the pen of Hyde', and says they are 'as superior to those of the opposite side in argument as they are in eloquence'.<sup>1</sup> Modern readers find these declarations dull, contemporaries complained that they were too witty and too elegant for serious political documents. 'Our good pen will harm

<sup>1</sup> *The Constitutional History of England*, ii. 147, ed. 1863.



us,' said one sage nobleman. Another Royalist complained that Hyde was too constitutional—too much in love with a thing he called mixed monarchy, and did not know what real monarchy meant. But the papers attained the end for which they were written—they converted and convinced. 'The people were every day visibly reformed in their understandings.' Hyde gained the King thousands of partisans, for his main argument was one which every man could understand; that it was better to fight for the known laws of the land than for the 'new Utopia of religion and government' which the Parliament was endeavouring to found in England.

When the war began the value of Hyde's services diminished, because the season for arguments was over. But the King was not ungrateful. Hyde was knighted, admitted to the Privy Council, and made Chancellor of the Exchequer—a week or two after his thirty-fourth birthday. The Chancellorship of the Exchequer was not in that century the important office it is now—and just then there was very little in the exchequer—but it was high promotion for a young man. Hyde calls it 'an excellent stage for men of parts to tread and expose themselves upon, and where they have occasion of all natures to lay out and spread all their faculties and qualifications most for their advantage'. The post gave him an acquaintance with official forms, and as much training in administration as a Royalist could acquire while the Civil War was in progress. It secured him a permanent place in the King's councils. Whenever a negotiation with the Parliament was on foot his skill in drawing up papers was again in requisition, and sometimes Charles I adopted his advice on a question of policy. But in the main he played a secondary part during the Civil War, and I shall not trace his career through the four years of the war, or the fourteen years of exile which followed.

It was in 1652, after Worcester had put an end to all

hopes of a restoration by force of arms, that Charles II called Hyde to his little court, and from that date to the Restoration he was the King's chief adviser.

The policy he persuaded Charles II to adopt was a second edition of the policy which he had persuaded Charles I to adopt in 1642. He had urged Charles I to win back English public opinion by a wise passiveness—to make the law his guide—to concede what the law said he ought to concede, and to refuse what the law empowered him to refuse—holding that the King and the law together would be too strong for any antagonist. He now urged Charles II to adopt a waiting policy, and to seek to conciliate English opinion, with the faith that a time would come when England would recall him to his father's throne. 'All his activity,' said Hyde, 'was to consist in carefully avoiding to do anything that might do him hurt.' The King was not to take any step which would alienate the minds of the English people. He was not, for instance, to turn Catholic in order to get the support of Spain and the Pope, nor was he to allow his brothers to become converts to Catholicism. He was not to buy the support of any English party by surrendering the rights of the Crown or the rights of the Church. Monarchy, in short, was to be restored, not by sacrificing constitutional principles, but by sticking to them. When English malcontents made overtures to the exiled King, a clear and consistent line was adopted. The leaders of the party from which the overtures came were promised immunity for past offences and rewards for future service, but there were no concessions of principle. If inconvenient demands were insisted upon, Hyde's plan was to qualify any assent with the saving clause, 'If a free Parliament shall think fit to ask the same of his Majesty.'

In 1660 the long expected revulsion of feeling took place in England, and the King was recalled to his throne.

He was recalled unconditionally. Hyde had prevented the King from accepting conditions of his own accord, and Monck prevented Parliament from seeking to impose conditions on the King. All the details of the settlement were left to be determined between the King and Parliament—a Parliament in which the old Royalists were in a majority from the beginning, and became an overwhelming majority a year later. At the moment Hyde seemed indispensable. For years all the threads of the King's policy had been concentrated in his hands. He had more experience in business than any other Royalist possessed; he had the knowledge of the laws and the constitution which the immediate task required; his policy had been crowned with success. Every honour the Crown could confer was conferred upon him. He had been made Lord Chancellor in 1658, was raised to the peerage in 1660, and was created an earl in 1661. The marriage of his daughter to the King's brother gave him the prospect of a throne for his descendants. He had the complete confidence of the King himself. The notes exchanged between Charles and his minister during the sittings of the Council—which you may see in the Bodleian—attest the familiarity of master and servant, and the authority which the servant exercised over the master. Clarendon always disclaimed the name of prime minister—‘first minister,’ he said, ‘was a title so newly translated out of French into English that it was not enough understood to be liked.’ Nevertheless, he was more in the position of a modern prime minister than any man who had yet held the chief place amongst the councillors of an English king. He was more powerful than Burleigh or Salisbury had been, and more independent than either. For he did not confine himself to carrying out the King's policy, but conceived a policy of his own, and imposed it upon King and country by virtue of the support of Parliament.

It was this in the end which brought about Clarendon's



fall. People sometimes talk as if he fell because he reminded Charles of the Decalogue at inconvenient moments, and rashly told him that he had not a prerogative to make vice virtue. As a matter of fact the breach was due to political rather than to personal causes. King and minister held fundamentally different views as to religious policy. Charles desired to make toleration for Catholics and Nonconformists an integral part of the restoration settlement, partly because it seemed essential to the peace of the nation, and partly because he was a Catholic at heart. In the Church as in the State, Clarendon's one aim was to re-establish the state of things which existed before the war began. The Church was to be restored unconditionally as well as the monarchy. This policy the minister successfully carried out. In a few months, almost before the King realized what was happening, the bishops were in possession of their old power, and the Catholics and Nonconformists were under their feet again. All the King's belated efforts to make toleration part of the settlement were frustrated by the steady resistance of Parliament. Clarendon might disclaim responsibility for this result, and plead that public opinion was too powerful to be resisted. He might exhort the clergy to moderation, and blame the Commons for going too far. But the King was convinced that his minister had not supported him as he ought to have done, and felt that he had been outmanœuvred by an old parliamentary hand. Clarendon was saved from overthrow by the fact that he still possessed the confidence of the Commons and by the mistakes of his enemies.

The second cause for the breach was more general in its character. In political as in religious matters Clarendon was more conservative than his master, and this conservatism had been increased by the fourteen years he had passed out of England. Exile, says De Tocqueville, is the most cruel of all punishments, for while it

inflicts suffering it teaches nothing. 'It crystallizes, as it were, the minds of its victims, fixes in them the notions acquired in youth or those that were in vogue when they were exiled. For them the facts that occur, or the new customs that are established in their country, do not exist. They stand still, like the hands of a watch at the hour when it stopped.'<sup>1</sup> Without being as blind as a French *émigré* Clarendon had something of this temper. He never realized the new conditions the Rebellion had created, or the new forces which had grown up during the Interregnum. And, above all, he failed to appreciate the change which had taken place in the position of the House of Commons. Charles, on the other hand, had a more open and versatile mind than his minister, and was not hampered by any fixed principles. The King, laments Clarendon, 'had in his nature so little reverence or esteem for antiquity, and did in truth so much condemn old orders, forms, and institutions, that the objection of novelty rather advanced than obstructed any proposition. He was a great lover of new inventions, and thought them the effect of art and spirit, and fit to control the superstitious observation of the dictates of our ancestors.' Hence as new needs arose, and as new expedients had to be devised to meet them, the breach between King and minister continually widened: the one was always eager to adapt his policy to the requirements of the present, the other always firm in his adherence to the traditions of the past. The ill success of the Dutch War brought matters to a climax. Both King and minister had opposed the war, yet both were held responsible for its mismanagement. Parliament, which had gradually lost all confidence in Clarendon, demanded certain constitutional changes and certain changes of policy: it wanted new measures and new men. The minister urged the King

<sup>1</sup> *Memoir, Letters and Remains of Alexis de Tocqueville* (translated), 1861, i. 289.

to resist. 'Parliaments,' he told him, 'were not formidable unless the King chose to make them so. As yet it was in the King's power to govern them: if they found it was in theirs to govern him, nobody knew what the end would be.' The King thought otherwise. It seemed to him that an agreement with Parliament was worth the sacrifice of a few constitutional principles, and even the sacrifice of an unpopular minister. Personally he was weary of Clarendon. 'The truth is,' he explained to the Duke of Ormond, 'his behaviour and humour was grown so unsupportable, to myself and to all the world else, that I could no longer endure it; and it was impossible to live with it, and do those things with the Parliament that must be done, or the government will be lost.'

Clarendon's fall was sudden and irreparable. At the end of August 1667, the Great Seal was taken from him; in October he was impeached; at the end of November he fled from England. Vexed at his escape from their justice, Parliament passed an Act for his banishment, which made his return high treason, and his pardon impossible without the consent of both Houses. He died at Rouen on December 9, 1674. Thus for the last seven years of his life Clarendon ate once more the bitter bread of exile, finding what consolation he could in recounting the vicissitudes of the past, and building for himself from those memories a monument no vicissitudes could overthrow.

He had commenced his History of the Rebellion in one of the Scilly Islands on March 18, 1646, and continued it in Jersey during the next two years. By the spring of 1648 he had brought the story down to the opening of the campaign of 1644, and written seven books of the History of the Rebellion, and a few sections of the eighth. This narrative was not meant to be published; it was intended solely for the eyes of the King and a few



of his counsellors. [It was written with a definite practical purpose: he undertook not only to relate the events of the Rebellion and the causes which produced it, but to point out the errors of policy committed on the King's side. The trusty few who read it would learn from it how to avoid like errors in the future; it would teach them not only why the kingdom had been lost, but how it might be regained and kept. In short, the book was to be a private manual for statesmen, and for that reason it was full of political reflections and dissertations on constitutional questions. There was hardly any mention of Hyde himself, but the whole work was an elaborate vindication of the particular section of the Royalist party to which he belonged.]

For twenty years Hyde had allowed this narrative to remain unfinished. When he fled to France in December 1667, he left it and all the rest of his other papers in England. As soon as he found a permanent resting-place in France, and leisure for reflection, his thoughts turned once more to the past, and he sat down to write his reminiscences of the great events in which he had taken part. But the work he now began was an autobiography, not a history. For the information of his children, and in order to vindicate his career in their eyes, he related the story of his own life from his boyhood to his return to England with Charles II in 1660. Incidentally he told once more the story of the Rebellion and its sequel—he could hardly help that—but he naturally dwelt at length on his own part in events and on the personal side of the struggle rather than the constitutional questions it involved.

The interest of the Autobiography lies chiefly in the portraits Hyde draws of himself and his friends. Of himself he speaks with a curious mixture of frankness and complacency. He is very frank about his marriages; we do not gather that there was any frivolous romance

about them, and we do gather that he wished his children to be equally discreet in the management of their affections. Mr. Hyde's first inclination to marriage, he tells them, had 'no other passion in it than an appetite to a convenient estate'. That match did not come off; when he did marry it was because he found the temptations of literature and society too strong for him, and wished to bind himself down to the study of the law, and 'to call home all straggling and wandering appetites, which naturally produce irresolution and inconstancy in the mind'. The lady died six months after the marriage. Three years passed, during which Mr. Hyde was called to the Bar, and began to practise, but it was somewhat against the grain; he 'did not feel confident that he should not start aside', and he had 'long entertained thoughts of travels'. Accordingly, to 'lay some obligation upon himself which would suppress and restrain all those appetites', he tried the old remedy, and married again. It proved effectual: 'from the time of his marriage he laid aside all other thoughts but that of his profession.' It proved profitable, for he judiciously married the daughter of the judge in whose court he practised. It proved a very happy marriage: with this wife 'he lived very comfortably in the most uncomfortable times, and very joyfully in those times when matter of joy was administered'.

Some critics have complained of this lack of sentiment in Clarendon's character, and of a certain materialism in his nature. He would not have denied the charge, but would have taken it as a tribute to his worldly wisdom, and as one of the causes of his success. He sets forth his own estimate of his character with as much frankness as he relates the incidents of his life. He had great infirmities, he tells us, but providentially they never developed into vices. He had ambition, and 'great designs of raising himself', but not enough ambition to

adopt 'indirect and crooked means' of rising. He had some weaknesses too: 'he indulged his palate very much, and even took some delight in eating and drinking well,' but he is careful to add that he 'rather discoursed like an epicure than was one'. And though he had 'a fancy sharp and luxuriant' he asserts with confidence that his wit never transgressed the bounds of decorum. It is implied throughout that he was good company, and Evelyn confirms it when he writes many years later of being 'very merry' with my Lord Chancellor, and says that he was 'of a jolly temper after the old English fashion'.

The Lord Chancellor himself, at the close of his career, looking back on what he was at the beginning, sums up decisively in his own favour. Young Mr. Hyde, he tells us, 'was in his nature inclined to pride and passion, and to a humour between wrangling and disputing, very troublesome; which good company in a short time so much reformed and mastered, that no man was more affable and courteous to all kinds of persons. . . . That which supported him, and rendered him generally acceptable, was his generosity (for he had too much a contempt of money), and the opinion men had of the goodness and justice of his nature, which was transcendent in him in a wonderful tenderness and delight in obliging. His integrity was ever without blemish, and believed to be above temptation. He was firm and unshaken in his friendships; and though he had great candour towards others in the differences of religion, he was zealously and deliberately fixed in the principles both of the doctrine and discipline of the church.'

Another judge, Sir Fitzjames Stephen, remarks that 'few men have sung their own praises with such calm assurance', and admires Clarendon's 'solid deliberate admiration of himself'.<sup>1</sup> A truthful biographer must own that Clarendon did not overcome his passionate

<sup>1</sup> *Horae Sabbaticae*, i. 337, ed. 1892.



temper as completely as he alleges. In the days of his power he was often harsh and overbearing, and too easily moved to anger. But we must make allowances for the burden of office, for the contrariety of public affairs, for the gout, and for advancing years. Even the best of us often fail to retain in later life the genial amiability we possessed as undergraduates. Clarendon flattered himself a little—as we should all do if we drew our own portraits—but in the main his portrait of himself is true. He was inflexibly honest. He was ‘firm and unshaken in his friendships’. If ever any man had a genius for friendship it was Clarendon. Witness all those portraits of his friends in his History and his Autobiography, in which he brings out with unfailing skill alike the qualities which made them great and the characteristics which made them loveable. Witness above all that incomparable portrait of Falkland; twice over he draws it at length, and each time the long involved periods begin to glow and throb, and one feels behind the words the sense of irreparable loss and undying affection. [Statesmen, soldiers, and great noblemen, all the Royalist chiefs move through his pages; each figure has the clear bold outline and the warm colouring of life; each character is a consistent and harmonious conception, and possesses an individuality of its own.

There are some great exceptions. Clarendon frequently failed when he tried to draw the portraits of the leaders of the other party. He could understand men actuated by purely political motives: Parliamentary nobles such as Pembroke and Salisbury, and antiquarian lawyers such as Selden, were within the range of his sympathies. He could understand a man who was a Puritan because he hated the bishops, but doubts about doctrine and scruples about ceremonies seemed to him merely the result of ‘a working and unquiet fancy’, so far as they were not mere factiousness, or downright hypocrisy. His soul

could never enter into the secrets of enthusiasts, or, indeed, into any region beyond the range of the Thirty-nine Articles. Just as he fails to understand the nature of the Puritans so he fails to understand Puritanism in general, and his *History of the Rebellion* has the fundamental defect, that it is a history of a religious revolution in which the religious element is omitted.]

When Clarendon had completed his *Autobiography*, or rather brought it down to the date of the Restoration, an event happened which changed his plans. Hitherto he had been prohibited from all communication with England. But in 1671 his son Lawrence was allowed to visit him, and he brought his father the unfinished manuscript of the *History* written between 1646 and 1648. Clarendon read it through, and a new idea occurred to him. He would complete this *History*, and make it into something that could be published. Out of the work destined for a few fellow statesmen and the work destined for the eyes of his children alone he would put together something fit, in due season, for the eyes of the world. The vindication of his party and the vindication of himself should be used to complete each other. Accordingly he constructed out of the imperfect *History* written between 1646 and 1648 and the *Autobiography* written between 1668 and 1670 the *History of the Rebellion* as we now have it.

The process of construction was very simple.<sup>1</sup> Taking the fragmentary *History*, which ended at the beginning of 1644, and forms the first seven books of the published *History of the Rebellion*, Clarendon inserted into its framework a great number of passages from the *Autobiography* he had just completed. Next, to continue this, and to bring the story down to the Restoration, he added the whole of the later part of the *Autobiography* which forms, roughly, books X to XVI of the published

<sup>1</sup> This subject is treated at length in three articles published in *The English Historical Review* during 1904.

History. Finally, to join these two portions of his work, and fill up the gap between the point where the first ended and the point where the second began, he wrote the eighth book and parts of the ninth, and utilized some fragments he had by him. A few amplifications, explanations, and additions tacked the whole together, and the book published in 1702, and republished about twenty times since, had assumed its final shape.

[The result is that as an historical authority Clarendon's History of the Rebellion is a very difficult and perplexing book for later historians to employ. It is such a patch-work. Parts of it were written with one object, parts with another; parts of it were written at one time, parts at another: some passages were written when he had documents to consult and friends to question about doubtful facts, other passages when he had nothing but his own memory to rely upon. Finally, while some sections were written when his recollections of events were fresh and strong, others were written when the events had been blurred and obscured by the passage of time, and all that was clear was the triumphant or suffering figure of Mr. Hyde in the midst of them.

To estimate the value of any statement made in the History of the Rebellion, you have to ask when it was written, why it was written, and whether the writer had any documents at his side when he wrote. The supreme value of Dr. Macray's admirable edition of Clarendon's Rebellion lies in the fact that it makes it easy to answer all these questions, for it shows whether a particular passage is taken from the Autobiography, or from the fragmentary History written in 1646, or from the passages added in 1671 to connect them together. And besides this it adds dates, which make Clarendon's story much clearer, gives occasional references to his correspondence, and corrects in the notes errors caused by Clarendon's defective memory.



Unhappily, there is no equally scholarly edition of Clarendon's Autobiography, or of the continuation of it which contains his account of the first seven years of the reign of Charles II. The *Life of Edward, Earl of Clarendon*, which the University Press published in 1759, is a mere fragment. It includes only the first portion of the life, and not even all of that, with some detached passages from the later portions. This was the result of Clarendon's own act. He mutilated his Autobiography by transplanting three-quarters of it into his *History of the Rebellion*. If we had this life of himself as it stood in 1670, it would, probably, be more read and better known than the *History of the Rebellion* is to-day. For it possessed a unity and homogeneity which the *History of the Rebellion* lacks. Moreover, by some natural instinct, most people prefer autobiography to history; the personal element in the story is what interests them, and they prefer it to the wisest disquisitions about constitutional questions, and even to the most accurate accounts of campaigns and debates. When Clarendon wrote the Autobiography his powers were at their height. It is a more skilful and artistic composition than the *History*. Most of the scenes and portraits which historians of literature quote as examples of Clarendon's genius are derived from the Autobiography. I sometimes think that he committed a literary crime when he hacked and mangled it to supplement the earlier work.

On the other hand the fragmentary *History* written between 1646 and 1648, considered merely as an authority, or a piece of documentary evidence, is of far greater value than the Autobiography. It is much more accurate and much more instructive. If it is less picturesque it throws more light on the causes of things. On the whole we need not too much regret the resolution which led Clarendon to combine his two works in order to make the *History of the Rebellion*. By the combination of the

two he gave his book variety at the expense of unity. By the blending of the personal and general elements it acquired its unique character, and became something between history and memoirs which partakes of the qualities of both. To the arrangement of the History of the Rebellion this combination was certainly detrimental. Clarendon's narrative has not the lucid order of Macaulay's; owing to the process by which it was constructed it is full of digressions, and sometimes confused. But these defects are covered and compensated by his style. It does not hurry his readers along with the rapid and irresistible rush of Macaulay's. It has the ample, easy flow of a great river, that, as Tennyson says, 'moving seems asleep,' but carries you to the end of the journey without haste and without noise.

I have spoken of Clarendon as a statesman and as an historian. There is a third character in which he is in still closer relation to us—that of Chancellor of this University. At the beginning of 1660 Richard Cromwell was our Chancellor. He resigned on May 8—the day when Charles II was solemnly proclaimed king. The Marquis of Hertford, who had been Chancellor from 1643 to 1648, was restored to his old position, but died a few months later. Three days after his death, on October 27, 1660, Clarendon was elected Chancellor, and held that office till December 1667. He was not a very active Chancellor. The work of turning out the heads and Fellows appointed during the Interregnum by the Puritan Visitors had been carried out by a new set of Visitors appointed in June 1660, so that the restoration of the old régime in the University was practically effected before his chancellorship began. But his political and legal position enabled him to further the interests of the University in many ways. Clarendon was not a reforming Chancellor—he preferred old ways in the

University as well as in the state, but amongst his miscellaneous writings there is a discourse on Education which proves that he thought the University was not quite perfect.<sup>1</sup> He called it a 'Dialogue' but in reality it is a discussion between half a dozen persons—a courtier, a lawyer, a country gentleman, a colonel, an alderman, and a bishop. They discuss elementary as well as higher education, but limit their aim to the education of 'the children of persons of quality' who can afford to pay for it, and leave the children of common people 'to those common ways which their fortune as well as their inclinations lead them into'. After criticizing the public schools they pass to the Universities. There is a general agreement that their discipline is not strict enough. The courtier says that the learning young men get there 'is only a pedantic way of disputing and wrangling', which makes them disagreeable to all well-bred persons. Moreover, he adds, the Universities are 'places of debauchery, schools to learn to drink in'. The bishop replies that drinking is a vice too common throughout the kingdom, and that the Universities are, on the whole, soberer than other places. But he thinks their discipline and morals need inquiring into. Quite like a modern bishop, he suggests a Royal Commission composed of 'persons of the greatest quality and of known gravity and virtue'. Colonel and lawyer both agree that one cause of the decay of discipline is that undergraduates are too old when they come up. No boy should remain in any public school after he is sixteen, says the colonel. The lawyer adds that 'those lubberly fellows who come from great schools after they are nineteen or twenty years of age, and bring their debauchery with them' do much to damage the reputation of the University.

Another reason for the shortcomings of the under-

<sup>1</sup> *A collection of several Tracts of the Right Honourable Edward Earl of Clarendon, 1727, p. 313.*



graduates of the time is also suggested. Our Universities, says the colonel, 'are defective in providing for those exercises and recreations which are necessary even to nourish and cherish their studies.' Clarendon thought that this defect caused too many men of rank to send their sons abroad to the French academies at Paris, where youths were instructed in riding, dancing, and fencing. He held that it would be better to encourage officially the teaching of these arts in the English Universities. The danger of their interfering with the studies of the place might easily be prevented. Regular hours should be set apart for both, and the penalty for neglect of the studies should be restraint from the exercises. One of his projects was the erection of a handsome riding-school, and the provision of horses and riding-masters for the instruction of young men. It was never realized: but to this idea we owe one of the two buildings associated with Clarendon's name in the Oxford of to-day. In 1751, Henry, Viscount Hyde, Clarendon's great-grandson, left Clarendon's MSS. to certain trustees for the benefit of the University, with instructions to use the profits derived from their publication as the 'beginning of a fund for supporting a manège or academy for riding and other useful exercises in Oxford'.<sup>1</sup> The will was rendered void by his premature death, but his intentions were carried out by his sisters. The fund accumulated till 1868, when it reached the sum of about £12,000, and the trustees then devoted it to the erection of the Clarendon Laboratory. The University, we are told, 'no longer needed a riding-school, and the claims of physical science were urgent,' but those who, as they walk down St. Giles's, meet the little bands of future Indian civilians, preparing

<sup>1</sup> For a history of this scheme and of others of the same nature see Mr. T. W. Jackson's preface to Dr. Wallis's Letter against Mr. Maidwell, in volume i of the *Collectanea* of the Oxford Historical Society.

to witch the world with noble horsemanship rather than actually doing so, will be inclined to hold that our Chancellor's proposed school would not have been entirely useless.

Besides the Laboratory, there is another institution which is a memorial of Clarendon's connexion with us. Mr. Madan has admirably summarized the history of the Oxford University Press in a pamphlet published last year. Its only fault is that it is 40 pages long instead of 400. A detailed history of the development of the Press and its publications is much to be desired, and would be a contribution of great value to the history of learning in England. Mr. Madan points out that there was a printing press in Oxford as early as 1478, and that as early as 1517 'the aegis of the University was already held over the Press'.<sup>1</sup> The continuous existence of a University Press dates from 1585; but its real importance begins in 1671, when Dr. Fell and his partners took over the management of the Press, after its establishment in the Theatre which Archbishop Sheldon had built to accommodate it. The Theatre proved in many ways unsuitable for the purposes of the printers, so in 1713 a new printing-house was built, in which the Press was housed from 1713 to 1830. This edifice, designed by Hawksmoor, was styled 'The Clarendon Printing House', and is known to us to-day as The Clarendon Building. The question is why Clarendon's name was attached to it? According to the traditional account, given in Ingram's *Memorials of Oxford*, the reason is because it was built out of the profits of the History of the Rebellion. According to Hearne, the three printers who leased the press paid £2,000, and the University found the rest of the money. But since the profits of the six editions of the History of the Rebellion published before

<sup>1</sup> *A Brief Account of the University Press at Oxford.* By Falconer Madan, Oxford, 1908.

1713 must have done much to fill the purse of the University, there is something to be said for the tradition. Hearne is extremely indignant both at the expensiveness of the new printing house and the association of Clarendon's name with it. He calls it 'a magnificent pile, erected purely to gratify the ambitions and desires of some talkative people, who have no manner of regard to the credit of learning or the University. . . . Out of a whim,' he adds, it is to be called "'Typographeum Clarendonianum'", and Archbishop Sheldon is to be forgotten as a benefactor to Oxford printing, if people will comply with the whim, purely owing to some vain ignorant heads of Houses, such as old Lancaster commonly called Slyboots'.<sup>1</sup>

Most people will think, however, that Dr. Lancaster, the Provost of Queen's, to whom Hearne refers, was very happily inspired when it occurred to him to connect with the learned press of the University the name of that Chancellor of the University who was most eminent as a man of letters. The application of the name to the institution itself, after its migration in 1830 from the building in Broad Street to its new quarters in Walton Street, is a sign that the University felt the appropriateness of the choice. Archbishop Sheldon himself, far from regarding his own services as slighted, would have rejoiced at this honour done to his old friend, and there is no form of commemoration which would have pleased Clarendon himself more.

Yet of all the memorials of Clarendon's chancellorship in Oxford the most interesting is not either of the build-

<sup>1</sup> Hearne's *Diary*, iii. 288 ; iv. 254. In a later passage, dated September 19, 1721, he adds: 'Yesterday was put up, on the south side of the new Printing House . . . a statue of the Earl of Clarendon that wrote the History, as if he were founder, whereas he never thought of it, and 'tis only upon account of the money they have pretended to lay out upon this House arising from the copy of his History.' *Ib.* vii. 230.



ings called after him, but a manuscript exhibited in the Bodleian<sup>1</sup>—the letter which he wrote in December 1667, as he halted at Calais after his flight from England, to resign into the hands of the University the high office it had conferred upon him seven years earlier.

It runs thus :—

Good Mr Vicechancellor,

Having found it necessary to transport my self out of England, and not knowing when it will please God that I shall returne againe, it becomes me to take care that the University be not without the service of a person better able to be of use to them than I am like to be, and I doe therefore hereby surrender the office of chancellour into the hands of the said University, to the end that they make choice of some other person better qualified to assist and protect them than I am ; I am sure he can never be more affectionate to it. I desire you, as the last suit I am like to make to you, to believe that I do not fly my country for guilt, and how passionatly soever I am pursued, that I have not done any thinge to make the University ashamed of me, or to repent the good opinion they had once of me ; and though I must have no further mention in your public devotions (which I have alwayes exceedingly valued) I hope I shall be alwayes remembred in your private prayers as

Your affectionate servant

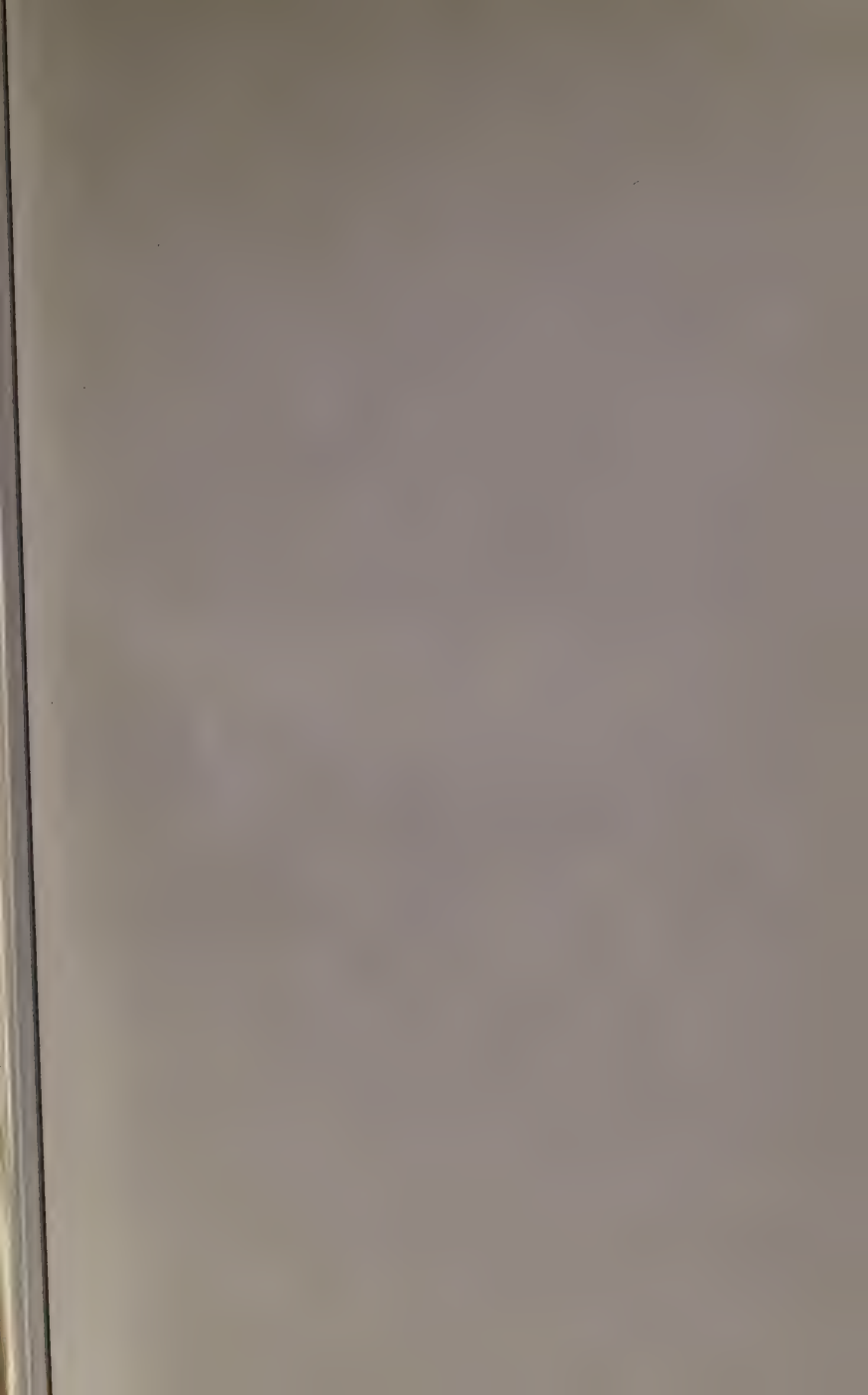
CLARENDON.

One word more in conclusion. It has been the happy fate of the University in the past to be closely associated with the fortunes of Clarendon both as a statesman and as an historian. It profited by his influence when he was alive, and by his writings after his death. It still owes him something to-day. If it desires fitly to commemorate the tercentenary of his birth, it should complete the publication of his papers and print a new edition of his life. The last edition of the Life and of the Continuation of the Life was published in 1857. Except as a piece of

<sup>1</sup> Wood, ii. 123.

printing it is utterly unworthy of the University Press. The index is one of the worst in existence. There are no notes. The dates given in the headlines are frequently wrong. As for the text, the reader is given no notice of the fact that large passages of the original have been transferred to the pages of the History of the Rebellion, and some passages of the original have not been printed either in the History or the Life. In every respect the edition is a glaring contrast to Dr. Macray's edition of the companion work.

As to Clarendon's correspondence, a selection from it was published in the eighteenth century. A Calendar of the whole collection was commenced in 1869, but its publication was suspended in 1876, when three volumes had been issued. Volumes IV and V were never published, so that the correspondence for the years 1658 to 1667 remains uncalendared. The completion of this Calendar would be of great service to English historians, and is indeed indispensable to them. Had the papers been in private hands instead of in the Bodleian they would long ago have been calendared by the Historical Manuscripts Commission. And it is not to the credit of the University that it should leave unfinished an enterprise it has once taken in hand. Once more, therefore, I urge the Delegates of the Press to complete the publication of this Calendar.











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